

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN IRISH TIMES MARCH 30, 1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN IRISH TIMES MARCH
30, 1978 UNDER HEADING NO CHANGE:

MR. BEGIN'S REPORT YESTERDAY TO THE ISRAELI
PARLIAMENT ON HIS ABRASIVE TALKS WITH PRESIDENT
CARTER SHOWED THAT NOTHING HAD CHANGED, AS FAR
AS THE PRIME MINISTER WAS CONCERNED. HE DID
NOT MOVE AN INCH FROM THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED IN
WASHINGTON, ALTHOUGH HE WAS SUBJECTED TO A
DEGREE OF HECKLING, AND AN ATTACK BY THE LEADER
OF THE LABOUR OPPOSITION, MR. PERES, WHO ACCUSED
HIM OF BEING BOUND BY AN IDEOLOGY WHICH DID NOT
ALLOW HIM TO ADAPT TO CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES.

NEVERTHELESS, AT THE END OF THE EIGHT-HOUR
DEBATE, THE OPPOSITION WITHDREW ITS POTENTIALLY
DIVISIVE MOTION OF CONFIDENCE, AND THE KNESSER
VOTED ITS SUPPORT OF MR. BEGIN BY TWO TO ONE.
MR. PERES TEMPERED HIS CRITICISM BY OBSERVING
TARTLY THAT THE US ADMINISTRATION MUST BE HELD
TO SHARE THE BLAME FOR THE FAILURE OF THE TALKS.
THIS IS THE KEY TO YESTERDAY'S PARLIAMENTARY
PROCEEDINGS.

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NO MATTER WHAT MR. CARTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE
VANCE SUBSEQUENTLY SAID IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO
DENY THAT THEY HAD LEANED ON ISRAEL, OR SOUGHT TO
INTERFERE WITH THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL DECISIONS,
ISRAELI OPINION HAS NOT BEEN CONVINCED. MANY OF
MR. BEGIN'S CRITICS HAVE CLOSED RANKS

BEHIND HIM FOR THE TIME BEING, THUS SIGNALLING THE REALITY OF NATIONAL UNITY TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

MR. BEGIN DIRECTLY ACCUSED THE US GOVERNMENT OF CHANGING ITS MIND AND WITHDRAWING ITS EARLIER APPROVAL OF HIS PEACE PLAN AFTER IT HAD BEEN REJECTED BY EGYPT. WITH THE EXASPERATING LOGIC OF WHICH HE IS A MASTER - IN COMPANY WITH MR. ENOCH POWELL - THE PRIME MINISTER ARGUED THAT, IF HIS PROPOSALS WERE SEEN AS FAIR AND JUST BY WASHINGTON A FEW WEEKS AGO, THOSE QUALITIES MUST STILL DISTINGUISH THEM, WHATEVER ATTITUDE WAS TAKEN BY PRESIDENT SADAT.

THE CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE INTERPRETATIONS OF UN RESOLUTION 242 REMAINS. ISRAEL MAY BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE RESOLUTION AS THE BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS; BUT THIS WOULD LEAVE IT STILL UNCOMMITTED ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK, ALTHOUGH OBLIQUELY SUGGESTING THAT EVEN THIS MATTER MIGHT APPEAR ON THE AGENDA IN DUE COURSE. AT THE SAME TIME, MR. BEGIN ONCE AGAIN HAS MADE CLEAR THAT THE AMERICAN IDEA OF A WEST BANK REFERENDUM AFTER FIVE YEARS OF WHAT THE ISRAELIS DESCRIBE AS ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY IS UNREALISTIC, AND WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

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IT NOW REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER ANY SEMBLANCE OF LIFE CAN BE RESTORED TO THE DIRECT ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DISCUSSIONS. THE MILITARY END OF THESE IS A LITTLE MORE HOPEFUL THAN THE POLITICAL: AND THE ISRAELI MINISTER OF DEFENCE, MR. WEIZMAN - WHO HAS NOT BEEN SLOW TO CRITICISE MR. BEGIN'S INFLEXIBILITY IN RECENT WEEKS - WILL TRY HIS LUCK AGAIN IN CAIRO. HE IS THE MAN TO WATCH IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY AHEAD. HE IS ALSO THE MAN WHO MIGHT SUCCEED MR. BEGIN AS PRIME MINISTER.

THE FACT THAT MR. BEGIN SURVIVED, IN RELATIVE COMFORT, YESTERDAY'S ORDEAL IN THE KNESSET MEANS ONLY THAT DISAPPROVAL OF HIS TACTICS HAS BEEN PLACED TEMPORARILY IN COLD STORAGE. IF HE CONTINUES TO FAIL TO ORIGINATE NEW ANGLES OF APPROACH, IF HE IS SEEN AS A PROPONENT OF PERPETUAL STALEMATE, HE WILL HAVE TO RECKON WITH A DOMESTIC POLITICAL CRISIS. PROPERLY CONCERNED AS THEY MUST BE ABOUT THE NATION'S SECURITY AND A SAFE FUTURE FOR ITS CHILDREN, MANY ISRAELIS SENSE

THAT A RELAPSE INTO ENTRENCHED POSITIONS CONCEIVABLY
COULD DENY THEM EXACTLY WHAT THEY SEEK IN THE LONG
TERM. CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND ADAPTATION.
IF MR. BEGIN DOES NOT PROVIDE IT, OTHERS WILL BE
CALLED UPON TO DO SO - UNLESS WASHINGTON, BY SOME
HAMFISTED INTERVENTION, INADVERTENTLY MAKES THIS
IMPOSSIBLE. KRENE

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